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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tajikistan, Eritrea, Estonia, Lebanon, Italy, Hungary, Ghana and Ukraine among speakers in General Assembly's general debate today.

+ Pakistan, Mexico, Netherlands, Belarus, Luxembourg, Republic of Korea, New Zealand and Benin among speakers in general debate yesterday.

+ Secretary-General expresses condolences to India after Maharashtra earthquake; United Nations ready to assist in relief efforts.

+ Secretary-General convenes round table to mark third anniversary of World Summit for Children.

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Kiro Gligorov, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, today said that his country was dedicated to strict compliance with the United Nations Charter, supporting measures to enhance international peace and security, the democratization of international relations, the advancement of human rights, good neighbourly relations and the use of preventive diplomacy. Speaking in the General Assembly's general debate, he expressed concern over the continuation of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the threat of "an all-out Balkan war". Permanent peace would not be possible without compliance with the principles that borders could not be changed by force, that the international community did not accept ethnic cleansing and that the rights of minorities must be respected.

President Gligorov said the Security Council's decision to deploy a contingent of United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) troops in his country had proved justified, timely and efficient, and it had demonstrated the enormous advantages of preventive diplomacy. Discussing the impact of the sanctions imposed against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), he said that his country's economic situation was very difficult, and that its survival and development depended on international assistance.

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For information media--not an official record

Emomali Rakhmonov, Chairman of the Supreme Council of Tajikistan, today said that his Government was seriously concerned by the attempts to regionalize the internal Tajik conflict. His country was not "hatching any inimical plans" with regard to Afghanistan, he stressed, and the measures being adopted to strengthen the safety of its border with that country were fully in keeping with norms of international relations. He took hope from the advances made in negotiations in Kabul and said that permanent, substantive dialogue with the leadership of the Islamic State of Afghanistan would help remove some of the other "well known irritants".

Tajikistan was greatly concernd by the course of events in the "hot spots" of the planet, and knew how destructive the force of local conflict could be, he said. He appealed to the world community to multiply its efforts to end and prevent that kind of conflict. The force of arms could not solve a single contentious issue. In that connection, Tajikistan was seriously concerned about the uncontrolled and unsanctioned trade in arms in areas of intense instability. A massive arming of entire regions was taking place, and Tajikistan knew from bitter experience how unbelievably hard it was to take away from a population weapons they had obtained illegally.

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Isaias Afwerki, President of Eritrea, told the General Assembly today that at this critical juncture in its history, his country needed and deserved international assistance, not only because the United Nations and the international community bore special responsibility for what had happened there, but also because it was a test case for the Organization's Agenda for Peace. Thus far, that support had fallen far short of expectations. He said the international aid programme was deeply flawed, unfair and ill-structured to respond to the vital needs of recipient communities.

While acknowledging the achievements of the international intervention in Somalia, he said the increasing toll in civilian lives had cast a long shadow on that operation. He warned that the precipitate withdrawal of United States troops would not only signal a lack of commitment by the United States to the intervention, but would eventually make the position of the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II) untenable. That would plunge Somalia into a catastrophe much worse than the anarchy which had prompted the intervention in the first place. He also said that the countries in the region, whose contribution had been neglected, needed to become part of the process in a more meaningful and formalized way, as it affected them more than anyone else.

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Estonian President Lennart Meri told the General Assembly today that the Second World War was continuing in his country because the foreign forces which had occupied Estonia in 1940 were still there. Russian President Boris Yeltsin, he said, should strengthen the world's confidence in democracy by withdrawing the remaining forces from Estonia and Latvia and by signing international agreements to that effect. He appealed to the United Nations to help solve the problem, and suggested that it mandate a mission to be led by

an authoritative European politician. The use of preventive diplomacy could remove a potential source of conflict and thus strengthen the Organization's prestige, he said.

President Meri rejected the argument chat the Russian Federation could not house forces withdrawn from the Baltic States, saying that that approach lacked any legal basis. Furthermore, Estonia and her partners would help solve the housing problem problem by providing financial and material aid. He also rejected the argument that ex-Soviet forces were needed to defend the human rights of Russians residing in the Baltic States, saying that those residents did not wish to become pawns in a political game.

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Rafic Hariri, the Prime Minister of Lebanon, today told the General Assembly that peace was the only path to follow as all other options had proven futile. Lebanon was facing the future with a new sense of unity, having put the tragedy of the civil war behind it. It was fully committed to the United Nations and its Charter, and deserved the support of the world community. The magnitude and intensity of the conflict in Lebanon had proved that the nation was too strong to be eliminated. The Government was striving to restore the country to its former position in the world community. Lebanon's major loss had been the emigration of many talented people, and it now had to draw them back.

Mr. Hariri expressed gratitude for the work of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). He called on the international community to work forcefully for the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), and demanded that Israel withdraw from all occupied Lebanese territory. The Lebanese Armed Forces would assume full responsibility for those areas once Israel had withdrawn. Lebanon would be an active participant in making peace; it had suffered from unilateral deals and partial solutions, and believed that peace was indivisible. There could be no durable peace in the Middle East without the involvement of Lebanon and Syria, he stressed.

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The Foreign Minister of Italy, Beniamino Andreatta, said today that in terms of United Nations practices, the traditional counterpointing of diplomacy and military action no longer corresponded to current reality. He told the General Assembly that while the unity of military command was essential to the success of an operation, the use of force had to be considered in view of its advisability and timing with respect to political objectives. In situations involving crowds of civilians, non-lethal anti-riot equipment should be used. Not only Italy, he said, but other troop-contributing countries had stressed that mechanisms were needed to exempt their troops from orders that might be illegal, inconsistent or in contradiction with an operation's aims.

Mr. Andreatta expressed hope that the parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina would agree to end the fighting there, but added that the international

community must not forget that crimes against humanity had been committed during the conflict. He applauded the establishment of the International Tribunal to deal with those crimes and said tough sentences should be handed down, although Italy opposed the use of the death sentence. He suggested that the international community bring the same determination to the establishment of an international criminal court to prosecute the most serious human rights violations.

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Hungarian Foreign Minister Géza Jeszenszky said in the general debate today that the convulsions of world history had been strongly felt in his country, but that the Government had successfully maintained internal stability. Conflict had been raging in the former Yugoslavia for two years, but not even the gravest crimes against humanity had persuaded the world to counter aggression promptly or to prevent the acquisition of territory by force and ethnic cleansing. He said the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter should be upheld without compromise. He called attention to the economic losses suffered by Hungary as a result of its implementation of sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) and said an effective mechanism should be established to tackle the problems sanctions implemented by Security Council caused to third party States.

Mr. Jeszenszky went on to say that the United Nations Charter should be reviewed and certain provisions brought into line with changing realities. The distinction between signatories and enemy States should be eliminated. Some States should be more intimately involved in the maintenance of international peace and security, he said, adding that Germany and Japan were qualified for permanent membership of the Security Council.

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Ghana's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Obed Asamoah, speaking in the general debate today, said that the world was faced with an economic and social situation similar to that which preceded the two world wars. All the political changes and national and ethnic conflicts, aggravated by global recession, threatened to undermine the purposes of the United Nations. He urged the continued pursuit of the goal of total disarmament and said Ghana would like to see the proposed Arms Register include the national production of arms and all other weapons of destruction. Disarmament would obviously be easier, he said, in an environment of peace based on mutual confidence and in that context, he welcomed the efforts of the United Nations to shoulder the increasing burden of peace-keeping and peacemaking.

However, he continued, there were lessons to be learnt for current and future operations. He cited as examples the holding of elections in Angola and Cambodia without the fulfillment of certain conditions such as disarmament and cantonment of troops, a mistake which the United Nations did not intend to repeat in Mozambique. Peacemaking could be a slow and painful process, he said, but he went on to say that the new relations in the Middle East yielded an inspiring truth, that there was no conflict that was not capable of

solution. He welcomed the decision to sustain the United Nations presence in Cyprus, and called for greater United Nations involvement in Sudan.

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Ukrainian Foreign Minister Anatoly Zlenko told the General Assembly today that membership of the United Nations was one of the most important guarantees of his country's security and independence. Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, Ukraine had lived next to a zone of instability, alienation and even tension. Every crisis in Europe could affect it in one way or another. Ukraine thus advocated the creation of a "Central and East European space of stability and security", including the Baltic and Black Sea areas, as a contribution to preventive diplomacy.

Ukraine had inherited a huge nuclear arsenal from the Soviet Union, but had proclaimed its intention to become non-nuclear, Mr. Zlenko continued. However, disarmament presented certain problems, including the need for financing -- an estimated $2.8 billion -- and the need for reliable guarantees of national security. The return to Ukraine of nuclear components from dismantled warheads, or compensation for them, and unemployment among former servicement were also issues which had to be resolved. He drew attention to Ukraine's difficult economic situation, and said that measures had been taken to attract investment and to develop bilateral trade and economic relations.

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Abdul Sattar, Pakistan's Minister for Foreign Affairs, yesterday told the General Assembly that his country was deeply grieved because its troops in Somalia had suffered heavy casualties. However, it would not abandon the United Nations mission, but would continue to work for peace and harmony in that country. The optimism generated by the end of the cold war had been blighted by events in Bosnia and Herzegovina, he said. A United Nations Member had been carved up by the use of force, and its people had been made to negotiate a so-called "agreement". "A plan that would reward aggression and legalize acquisition of territory by force cannot, and should not, win the approbation of the world community," he said. The General Assembly could still act to defend law and justice and preserve Bosnia and Herzegovina's sovereignty.

The crisis in Kashmir called for urgent action by the United Nations, he continued, as India had unleashed a brutal reign of terror in the occupied state. The right of the Kashmiri people to decide their own future had been specifically pledged to them by Pakistan, by India and by the United Nations. He called on India to fulfil its legal obligations and asked all other Members of the Organization to stop Indian violations of human rights in Kashmir and to ensure the implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions.

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Fernando Solana Morales, Mexico's Secretary for Foreign Affairs, yesterday told the General Assembly that given the increase in the membership of the

United Nations since its inception, it might be advisable to double the Security Council's membership. Those countries which contributed the most to peace should be represented on the Council, not those who were the world's largest arms exporters, he said. Mexico had never supported the veto right in the Council, as it was an undemocratic mechanism. Working groups should be set up in the Assembly to address the question of Council reform. He also expressed concern about attempts to expand peace-keeping operations into enforcement actions. When a peace-keeping operation was established, all concerned parties must give their consent. He urgently appealed to States to lay down parameters governing all the functions of such operations.

The Foreign Secretary noted that the United States, Canada and Mexico were to become the largest free trade area in the world. Mexico was also actively involved with its Latin American neighbours. As an Atlantic country, it felt close to the European Community and as a Pacific country, it had expanded its contacts with countries in Asia and the Pacific, he said.

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Pieter Hendrik Kooijmans, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, yesterday told the General Assembly that security could not be seen in military or political terms alone. Instability in the economic, social, humanitarian and ecological fields could also threaten peace and security. State sovereignty was sometimes difficult to define, and there were times when the international community had a moral duty to intervene, or for the United Nations to take over sovereignty, as in cases of anarchy. Recent Security Council resolutions on Bosnia and Herzegovina and Somalia had extended the definition of a threat to international peace and security. He supported the Secretary-General's call for a new diplomacy for democracy and human rights, which would be a valuable addition to "An Agenda for Peace".

Mr. Kooijmans called for increased funding for the United Nations Centre for Human Rights and for the creation of a high commissioner for human rights. He noted that the Netherlands would host the international war crimes Tribunal in the Hague. The country had also reorganized its armed forces to participate more effectively in future peace-keeping operations and had made military officers available to help prepare for and supervise them.

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In a statement to the General Assembly yesterday, Petr Kravchanka, Foreign Minister of Belarus, noted that his country had inherited strategic nuclear potential from the former Soviet Union. It had a major arsenal in the heart of the Europe and had a direct affect on global security and nuclear balance. Belarus, however, had chosen to be non-nuclear. It had removed tactical nuclear weapons from its territory and had ratified the Treaty on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Weapons. Belarus was the first sovereign State to voluntarily renounce possession of a developed nuclear potential and had made a real contribution to global security.

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The threat of illegal exports of nuclear materials, technology and equipment from the former Soviet Union was of great concern to the international community, the Foreign Minister continued. In response, Belarus had agreed with the United States to set up rigid export controls. On behalf of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Belarus would present to the current session a joint declaration on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the means of their delivery. He called on the United Nations and European Commission to continue efforts to study the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster and overcome them.

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Jacques Poos, Luxembourg's Minister for Foreign Affairs, External Trade and Cooperation, yesterday told the General Assembly that nationalism was, in the some ways, a natural expression of pride, but when pride was transformed into hostilities, nationalism became dangerous. Extreme nationalism was a real threat to the international order. Education for tolerance and legal protection for minorities were needed, and new instruments to that effect would be discussed next week at the meeting of the 12 European Community Ministers. Democracy must be strengthened at the national level, he stressed.

The peace plan being discussed by the three parties to the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina was complex, but it presented a hope for peace, Mr. Poos said.. The European Community would help with the implementation of an agreement. Preservation of peace was linked to the protection of human rights, he continued. It had been clearly stated at the World Conference on Human Rights that human rights were universal and the protection of those rights was closely linked to the exercise of democracy. He welcomed Russian President Boris Yeltsin's decision to organize free elections for all State bodies in that country.

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Han Sung-Joo, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Korea, yesterday told the General Assembly that his country strongly supported efforts to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons beyond 1995 through the extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). It also supported the strengthening of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards to ensure the effectiveness of the NPT. He urged existing nuclear Powers not only to accelerate their efforts to reduce their nuclear arsenals, but also to join the efforts for a comprehensive nuclear test-ban treaty.

Despite world-wide trends towards peace and cooperation, there was still tension on the Korean peninsula, he continued. The solution to the inter-Korean question should be sought in the context of the post-cold war international order of reconciliation and cooperation. He expressed particular concern regarding the North Korean nuclear programme. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea should honour its non-proliferation obligations under the NPT and comply with its safeguards agreement with the

IAEA, in conformity with Security Council resolution 825 (1993), he said.

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Donald McKinnon, New Zealand's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, said yesterday in the general debate that the world had four reasons for hope: the cold war was over; democracy was spreading; the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) provided an opportunity to end protectionism; and "Agenda 21", the programme of action adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), reflected a global consensus to preserve the environment.

New Zealand supported the Secretary-General's "An Agenda for Peace", he said. Revamping the Department of Peace-keeping Operations was a good idea, but more than a shift in resources was needed. The new philosophy of peace-building and peacemaking had to work in tandem with the well-tried peace-keeping philosophy of the past. The capacity to prevent conflicts must be improved. The suffering of refugees was beyond comprehension, but not beyond compassion. New Zealand had responded by making special provision for refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Somali and Cambodia; establishing programmes for vulnerable groups, such as women at risk; and by providing aid. The aim, he said, was to allow refugees to return home safely and in dignity.

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Robert Dossou, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Benin, said Africa needed peace or economic and political reform programmes would not succeed. He appealed to the parties to the Liberian Peace Agreement to cooperate with the United Nations in ending the suffering of the Liberian people. The international community must continue to work for peace in Somalia, Mozambique and Angola. The recognition by the United States of the legality of the Government of Angola would support that effort, he added.

The new economic order was excluding Africa and leading to an economic crisis there, Mr. Dossou said, warning that the continent's debt burden could lead to a slowing of world trade. Africa's situation demanded regional integration and international support for trade, research and development. The right to development must now be considered a priority. Benin attached great importance to the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), and to the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development. It had held a national conference to address relevant issues, particularly drought and desertification.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today expressed his sincere condolences to the Government and people of India for the appalling loss of life and devastation caused by the earthquake which hit the state of Maharashtra last night, according to a United Nations spokesman.

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The United Nations was already responding to the disaster and was ready to assist the Government in its relief efforts, and the Secretary-General was in personal touch with Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, the spokesman said.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, addressing a round table he convened today to mark the third anniversary of the World Summit for Children, said that with 148 countries having signed the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child and with a global plan of action to improve the health, nutrition and education of children by the year 2000, tactics were now the priority. Investment in children was an investment in the future of humanity and would provide the basis for democracy worldwide.

The gathering of Presidents, Prime Ministers and Special Envoys, under the co-chairmanship of President Violeta Barrios de Chamorro of Nicaragua and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia of Bangladesh, reported on how the promises made at the Summit had been turned into action. The goal of universal childhood immunization had been met by 1990. With national will and international support, speakers said, the mid-decade goals could be met and millions of children saved each year.

President Chamorro said the Convention on the Rights of the Child could become, by 1995, "the first universal law of humankind." James Grant, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), said that achieving the mid-decade goals "would do more for the well-being of children, in a shorter period of time, and at lower cost, than any other undertaking in history".

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